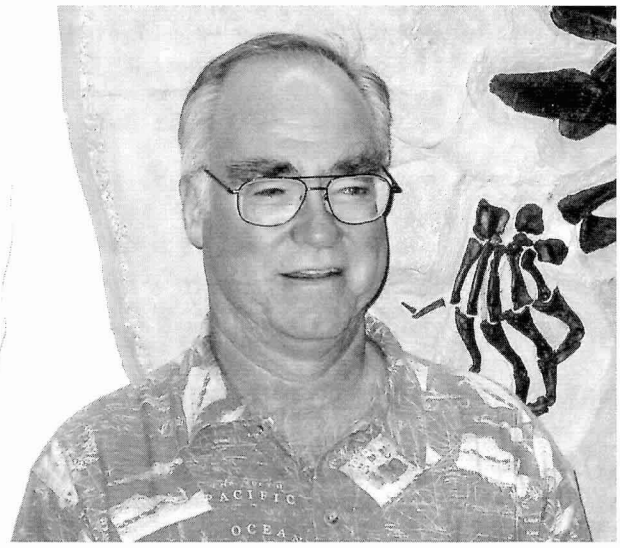
GETTING TO KNOW YOU

This issue of Rapa Nui Journal inaugurates a new feature, a mini-history of those doing current and important research on Easter Island. We begin this series with a thumbnail history of Charlie Love, a familiar name to Rapanuiphiles the world over.

Charles M. Love

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH?

I was born in Laramie, Wyoming, on July 3, 1944, during a horrendous thunder and lightning storm, second child of four, but what is more important is that it was my good fortune that my mother Jane was a practicing geologist (MS from Smith College) who had married my father, Dave Love – son of a Wyoming Scottish sheepherder. As my father grew up, he managed by dint of lots of hard work to receive his PhD in geology from Yale. My parents' combined attitude towards geologic time, the landscape, and man's use (or misuse) of it probably shaped my early perceptions on how the world operates. Most of my summers were spent in Jackson Hole, where my U.S. Geological Survey father spent his life mapping some 56 quadrangles of geology as well as producing 250 publications and eight books on Wyoming geology, all under the heavy handed editorial scrutiny of my mother, and she was a *stickler*, making Georgia Lee seem like a slacker. Added to this however, my father had been raised on a sheep ranch that had Arapahoe Indians living in teepees on it from time to time when he was young, and so he had a deep respect for them, their culture, and their archaeology. Like most archaeologist's beginnings, my going out with the family to find Indian "arrowheads", buffalo jumps, and so forth was a tradition. I think the important point here is that I was raised in an absolutely professional family and we recorded everything we found and saw, either by notes or photographs or both. "I only want you to operate on two things in life, Charlie." said my father, "Be observant, and *by God, THINK!*" Well, I haven't done enough of the latter. When I went off to college and stepped on the train platform, my mother advised, "Charlie, to thine own self, be true." And my father, who was probably remembering when *he* stepped on the train to go back east for the first time at Yale, and he must have appeared as a ranch-hand hick, cautioned, "Beware of painted ladies." So with those two pieces of advice, off I went.



Charles Matteson Love

HOW DID YOU GET INTO ANTHROPOLOGY/ARCHAEOLOGY, AND SPECIFICALLY THAT OF EASTER? WHAT TRIGGERED YOUR INTEREST?

That the island's social and ecologic history is a lesson not just for the globe, but for individual countries as well. When you use up critical resources, be they trees, soil, water, coal, oil or gas, the consequences may be dire for a population grown up in a dance with the pace of resource use. That is why the anatomy of the Easter Island cultural collapse is so important to me. We know the US is using up its oil—58% imported at the moment. As the price of oil goes up and China and India choose to take an ever-increasing share of the oil that is produced, global airline tickets will be the first to rise to un-buyable levels for the normal public. Cars will take on a new look and a new mileage. And eventually, passenger trains will look more attractive as a method of moving the great unwashed, not buses. Buses will be short haul stuff. But I digress.

Bill Mulloy was a significant figure in my life while growing up in Laramie and his oldest daughter Kathy was a year or two behind me in school. After he came back in 1956 from his stint with Thor Heyerdahl on Easter Island and other parts of the Pacific, he was an exotic dinner guest at many houses, including mine, and we all hung on his every word in cold snowy Wyoming, every description of tropical paradises, *moai* and tiki, on his adventures at sea. Having made up my mind to go back to graduate school in Anthropology in 1970, he volunteered to become one of two graduate thesis professors I was lucky enough to have. As a graduate student slave, one of my first duties was to draft museum display figures from his recent article entitled "A Speculative Reconstruction of Techniques of Carving, Transporting and Erecting Easter Island Statues". Having already taught for two years, I could appreciate his superb and absolutely inspiring lecture style. Because I was an "older" grad student with a hard science background in geology and who wasn't about to put up with any guff that so often happens in grad school, we commiserated, we argued, we bluffed, we speculated, we talked about what archaeological "facts" are and are not. He was stolid and wise and I was new to the depths of Anthropology. His exams were horrific (100 true-false questions). That was in such contrast to his lectures. Anyway, we were to become colleagues.

WHO OR WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE (SCIENTIFIC OR OTHERWISE) ?

When we excavated the *moai* roads, we uncovered a number of different features that I had to explain. Most of them have been. While on campus I had moved a 9 ton *moai*

replica upright on rollers, and I had assumed the Easter Island prehistoric roadways were flat, which in my own earlier notes and photographs were clearly not flat. But our experiments simply showed you could do it easily on a flat roadway. The excavations of parts of the roadway showed they could not be moved the way we did it unless you alter their U shape (which is our next experiment). Similarly, if the *moai* actually were moved upright on rollers, why go to the trouble of carving roadways into a U shape in the first place? It seems like a lot of work to do the same thing, and then you'd have to explain a different set of parameters. I cannot escape the evidence pointing to upright movement, I just have to figure out how to do it on a U shaped roadbed. And I have some ideas too, good ones, and I've actually wondered if the U shaped roadbeds came about by, say, 300 years of footwear after the *moai* moving period was over.

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE IF YOU HAD NOT PURSUED YOUR CURRENT RESEARCH AND INTERESTS?

I always had various research projects in the geology of Wyoming to turn to, and I have, but not in place of Easter Island research, but in *addition* to.

WHAT THEORY OR PROJECT OF YOURS TURNED OUT TO BE EITHER DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU EXPECTED, OR SURPRISED YOU?

I have already dispelled two systems of myths inadvertently. First was the discovery of the palm roots under Ahu Tautira during the excavations of 1979. John Flenley confirmed the pollen in 1984, and identified the nuts in the cave cache several years later as being the *Jubea* palm. Second, I was amazed that Poike had no blanket of basaltic rocks on it like most of the rest of Easter Island. But in hiking up to the top, it became obvious that it never had any stones on it, that the last eruptions of Poike blanketed the slopes with 10 meters of ash with no volcanic bombs, .thus the "short ears" never had to clear it, and the reasons for the first war are debunked The landscape thus did away with the collection of legends surrounding the reason and purpose of Poike ditch and the first war. That those legends are "fact" in Islander's tradition is fine with me, and I hope the Islanders keep them for lots of cultural reasons. But I am flabbergasted that those same legends remain "intact", meaning taken as historical fact, in much of the scientific literature both before and since!

WHAT WAS YOUR BEST EUREKA MOMENT?

If I had an epiphany it was in March of 1982 in the Smithsonian corridors at about 8 in the evening. I suddenly began to see Rapa Nui's whole picture and the archaeology that supported my fledgling view of it. Bill Mulloy published his somewhat speculative view of it in 1976, and though I understood most of what he visualized, his evidence for the whole of it was pretty scanty. He had not found the trees though he speculated that they were there from small root molds he found during his 1955 excavations at Ahu Vinapu. Similarly, he speculated that there had to be trees on the island from his published mechanism of moving them. At least we had found one, the palm in 1979, but at the time we didn't know which one, nor anything about it. But what irked me most about the various reports Bill Mulloy published through what was called the International Fund for Monuments, was that he would make comparisons of the *ahu* in question, with "other *ahu* on the island." But he would never say *which ahu*, and to me that was important. I resolved then when I reported on an *ahu*, I would say which ones it resembled. Perhaps the number of *ahu* examined by Bill became overwhelming, and to simply say they were like the others, was easier.

The grand old man of Near Eastern archaeology, Richards, had seen me coursing the corridors of the Natural History Museum's 4th floor and continually stopped me to ask, "Charlie, have you taken the time to reflect?" And I would respond to him, "If you had only a year to be here, wouldn't you DO all that you could and reflect later?" This happened at least six times and I would always respond in the same way, and he would always say, "You must take time to reflect". He was right of course, but at 37 and with the golden opportunity of a year at the Smithsonian, I didn't take the time to reflect. Well, I did of course, but it was limited. As incongruous as it sounds, I think we were both right. I was young enough to have the energy to do, he was old enough to reflect. I now find myself in conflict. I still have the energy to do, but maybe it is time to reflect more. I don't want to fall into the well-known archaeological pit of always having done, but die before you have time to reflect, and write.

I had been over all the Rapa Nui legends I could find translations for, and was impressed that not one mentioned trees, though a single one mentioned a palm frond (Englert? Metraux?). Even when Hotu Matu'a had arrived he had to live off fern leaves because the island was barren. Oops. That legend had clearly been readapted. In 1980, after having found the root molds that I knew were not worm-holes, in a general way I put together a small map where I had found them in the eroded soils around the island, but they were especially common on Poike and Rano Kau and the western slopes of Terevaka. Gerardo Velasco, in charge of various agricultural agencies through time on the island said when I showed him in the field what these palm root holes looked like, that these same holes were everywhere where they had dug holes or bulldozed roadways in Vaitea. Now we can calculate that the island may have hosted a forest of between 600,000 and 1.5 million *Jubea* palm trees at the time of the Polynesian arrival. With 100 kilos of edible nuts produced per tree per year, there was no shortage of food. But perhaps ferns were there too.

WHAT WAS YOUR MOST INTRIGUING SITE?

When I first mapped Ahu Akahanga, I was intrigued by it for lots of reasons. Some of these have been published in my article in Fischer (1993). But it would be my favorite site because it had 17 statues, and if they were all standing at the same time, it would have made a spectacular sight, compact, close standing, built draped over a descending slope, very different from most of the others. The *hare paenga* above it, however, I think are younger than Ahu Akahanga, and are an after-thought. They are built over the *ara moai* [*moai* road bed] and therefore date from after the time when they knew no other *moai* were going to be moved.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH (IN ANTHROPOLOGY/ ARCHAEOLOGY) ON EASTER ISLAND IN THE FUTURE?

I have so many possible research projects on Easter Island it would make your head spin. If there were five MA students who wanted to work on Easter Island, I could give them each a viable project in the next 6 minutes. Give me five more, and it will take about 10 minutes and a lecture to get them started.

I have four concise ideas about what I would like to do in the future, all small but critical projects to answer one, two, or three straight forward questions about Easter Island's prehistory, but I have also seen that, among several Easter Island researchers, that my ideas have become *their* project and so, reluctantly, I won't mention them at this point. Sadly, I've learned to distrust publicizing one's future plans. Geology, also, is becoming somewhat similar but it has taken two decades to catch up.

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY READING?

I have just finished "In the Heart of the Sea", by Philbrick, am nearly finished with "Krakatoa" by Winchester, and am starting "White Rivers & Black", by MacCreagh.

REVIEWS

The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilisation

Brian Fagan
Basic Books. Perseus Books Group, New York. 2004
ISBN 0-465-02281-2
252 pp., plus notes and index. Hard cover

Review by Georgia Lee, Ph.D.

THE TITLE OF FAGAN'S BOOK, "The Long Summer..." refers to global warming that began some 18,000 years ago with the end of the last Ice Age, and which has since continued. According to the author, Earth's climate has shaped civilizations. Fagan states: "Climate is, and always has been, a powerful catalyst in human history...."

Well-researched and written, this book is classic environmental determinism: history as shaped by climate – and a study of climate change aimed for those who are concerned with the future of civilization. Never mind Genghis Kahn, climate is the major player in the fall of civilizations.

Climatic studies provide some really dreadful warnings and this book puts them out there for us to ponder. Over millennia, civilizations arose, people ravaged their local habitats, and then found themselves vulnerable to climate shifts; when the climate changed, the civilization ended. Ancient Egypt was once in a benign Sahara – but it was turned into a desert. And, once a society is on the edge of environmental vulnerability, it takes very little to push it over: a change in weather patterns, a drought, or a 500-year cold snap (such as happened in Europe in the 14th century).

This book presents a haunting chronicle of our planet's past, and the impact on our frail species. While Fagan does not address Easter Island, he does explore the effects of El Niño on the Pacific Ocean and its associated landmasses. The bottom line is that, despite a long history of overpopulation and deforestation, we still have not learned to live reasonably. We have not learned from the past but have only increased the scale of our vulnerability. Sea levels rise, icecaps shrink, and the world's population is placed in a global experiment of unguessable consequences. Fagan writes, "Civilisation arose during a remarkably long summer... We still have no idea when, or how, that summer will end."

Between Nature and Culture; The Burial of the Placenta in French Polynesia (*Entre nature et culture - La mise en terre du placenta en Polynésie française*)

Bruno Saura
Haere Po, 2003. P.O. Box 1958 - 98 713 Papeete, Tahiti
Softcover, 162 pages ISBN 2 904-171 54-6

Translation and Review by Ann M. Altman, Ph.D.

THIS BOOK, BY A PROFESSOR at the University of French Polynesia in Tahiti, is both fascinating and frustrating: fascinating because of the subject matter and frustrating because of the presentation. The book deals in exhaustive detail with the custom, widespread throughout the Pacific, of ceremonial disposal of the placenta and umbilical cord after the birth of a child, which often, in Tahiti, occurs in conjunction with the planting of a tree. However, while the details of such practices, comparisons among Pacific islands, and analogies are of great interest, the book is written, somewhat disconcertingly, in three languages, namely, French, English and Tahitian, with frequent inclusion of Tahitian words in parentheses when the text is in English or French. Moreover, while there are numerous subheadings in each chapter, the book lacks an index so that the copious information in each section is relatively inaccessible.

To add to the confusion, there is a brief Summary of topics covered at the front of the book and a more comprehensive Table of Contents at the back. It is only from the Table of Contents that it becomes clear that some of the contributions to the book are not by Saura and that many of them have been published elsewhere. Moreover, some of the material appears in both French and English; some appear only in French; and some appear in both French and Tahitian.

It is certainly kind of Saura to provide translations of some of the material but it is unclear why only some of the text is translated and some is not. For example, one wonders why the lengthy discussion with Robert Koenig (the Director of the Haere po Press), printed in French at the end of the book, is translated into Tahitian but not into English, while one chapter by Saura is translated into English and others are not. A contribution in English by Georgia Lee is translated into French but the work of Pascale Bonnemère is only accessible to those who read French.

But now, having given full vent to my frustrations, I shall focus exclusively on what is admirable and interest-